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\$35,000 Awarded to Improve Child Care Programs Statewide

Milwaukee – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Elizabeth Burmaster presented grants to local child care agencies for enhancements to their programs at the COA Youth & Family Centers in Milwaukee today. Child care providers submitted applications for funds to assist with improvements to their programs through enhanced parent outreach, staff training, and/or additional materials for the center. Secretary Gassman congratulated the 33 child care agencies statewide for working to improve the quality of their programs and for fostering an atmosphere for greater parent involvement.

A total of \$35,000 is being awarded statewide as part of the Governor's KidsFirst initiative to improve the quality of the state's child care programs and get Wisconsin children and families off to the right start. Funding for the grants is provided by the Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Fund, the Children's Trust Fund and the Children's Hospital and Health System in Milwaukee.

"I congratulate these child care agencies for their focus on children and families and how important a nurturing environment is for the children. The quality of care and learning opportunities that our children receive is directly related to their development and ability to do well in school," Secretary Gassman said. "Study after study tells us that the investments we make in the early years last a lifetime."

"The first lessons of life are learned in the family. These grants help families do the best for their children." Superintendent Burmaster said. "To be sure, quality childcare and early learning programs are among the best investments we can make in our children. Every dollar invested in early learning programs returns significant savings by reducing the costs of drop-outs, remedial and special education, welfare, and crime."

The grants are being awarded during The Week of the Young Child, which is April 2-8, 2006. This is an annual celebration to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those needs. Also, April 2006 is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and the theme is "*Safe Children and Healthy Families are a Shared Responsibility.*"

During her visit, Secretary Gassman also highlighted the Governor's "*Strengthening Families*" initiative which is a collaborative effort of DWD, Children's Trust Fund, the CAP Fund, the Department of Health and Family Services, the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network and other partners. The initiative is focused on supporting the efforts of child care providers to strengthen families and help prevent abuse and neglect through their daily contact with parents and children. The initiative emphasizes Governor Jim Doyle's "**Kids First**" agenda to strengthen early childhood in Wisconsin.

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One hundred twenty-two child care agencies submitted proposals for the grants. The agencies that received the grants are as follows:

Agency Name	City	County	Amount
ACS Child Care	Appleton	Outagamie	\$750
AMC Child Care Center	Appleton	Outagamie	1000
Bumble Bee Learning Center	Milwaukee	Milwaukee	1000
Celebration Children's Center	Appleton	Outagamie	1000
COA Youth & Family Centers	Milwaukee	Milwaukee	1000
Community Child Care Center, Inc.	Stevens Point	Portage	1000
Community Options: 3 sites	Green Lake; Markesan; Montello	Green Lake; Marquette	1000
Discovery on Dousman	Wauzeka	Crawford	1000
Early Learning Center	Neenah	Winnebago	1000
Encompass CC: AB Walter Center	Green Bay	Brown	1000
Faith Child Care, Inc.	Appleton	Outagamie	1000
Gentle Lambs Childcare Center	Onalaska	La Crosse	1000
Kettle Moraine YMCA Cedar Lake Child Care	West Bend	Washington	1000
Kiddie Kampus Preschool & Day Care	Watertown	Jefferson	1000
Kids at Play Child Care Center	Stoddard	Vernon	1000
Neighborhood House of Milwaukee	Milwaukee	Milwaukee	750
Next Generation Now	Racine	Racine	1000
Noah's Ark Child Care Center	Boscobel	Richland	1000
Noah's Ark Day Care Center I & II: 2 sites	Superior	Douglas	1000
Noel Learning Center	Stevens Point	Portage	1000
Our Lady of the Assumption Child Care Center	Beloit	Rock	1000
RWCFS: 7 sites	Beloit (2); Janesville; Evansville; Delavan; Lake Geneva; Whitewater	Rock; Walworth	4000
St. Paul's Little Lambs Childcare Center	Manawa	Waupaca	1000
Starbright Child Care	Hayward	Sawyer	1000
UMOS Head Start: 8 sites	Aurora; Beaver Dam; Montello; Palmyra; Plymouth; Rice Lake; Red Granite; Plainfield	Taylor; Dodge; Marquette; Jefferson; Sheboygan; Barron; Waushara (2)	2000
Wausau Child Care: 2 sites	Wausau	Marathon	1000
Westby Day Care and Learning Center, Inc.	Westby	Vernon	1000
Western Dairyland-Altoona Head Start Center	Altoona	Eau Claire	500
Western Dairyland-Blair Taylor Head Start Center	Blair	Trempeleau	500
Western Dairyland-Naples Head Start Center	Mondovi	Buffalo	1000
Woods Hollow Children's Center	Fitchburg	Dane	1000
Woodson YMCA Child Development Center	Wausau	Marathon	500
YWCA Child Development Center: 2 sites	Wausau	Marathon	1000
Total Sites: 33 agencies, 51 sites			\$35,000